



Supercharge Your Support Network

How Having A Strong Support Network Can Help Prevent Suicide

By Bee Lockwood

When you are having distressing or uncomfortable thoughts, the last place you should leave them is alone in your mind. We need others to share our pain with, to act as shock absorbers that help us put these burdens into perspective. Support networks not only let our difficult feelings escape the constraints of our minds, but also give us a sense of responsibility to something outside of ourselves. It is just as important to care as to be cared for.

But the truth is, there may not be one person who can support you all of the time, just like you can't always be there for everyone. A strong support network has many layers to ensure that when things fall apart, you always have someone to fall back on.

It's important to think of your support network in a multilayered way, including everyone in the world who you are close to or share resources with. The "connectedness" that happens between people occurs on many levels, between you and the world, online and off, and in your community and personal life. Understanding how the different layers of support work can help you build a strong and supportive network.

Your World

We are born into an extraordinary support network. One of the most remarkable parts of being human is the natural empathy we have for one another. Remember that you are part of a larger whole – one that you are changing and affecting all the time. The more connected you feel to the world, the less likely you are to leave it.

Your Social Networks

Social media is a place to share how you are feeling and to hear the stories of others who have felt the same. Connecting to people through technology, whether or not you know them in real life, may help you remember that in this big world, you are not alone.

Your Community

Whether your community is at work, school, church, or even a book club or baseball team, having a group of people who encourage help-seeking is one of the most important aspects of suicide prevention. There is always a community that is there for you whether it's a youth center, support group, or even the Lifeline.

Your Family and Friends

Relationships with friends, family, and significant others that are built on trust and companionship serve as a protective factor against suicidal thoughts and behaviors. It's important to find a few people in your life that you can share the most intimate and sometimes uncomfortable thoughts with. These people care a lot about you and will want to help you find hope if you are struggling.